

# Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education

## Inspection Report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113654
<b>Local Authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	311325
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Anne Duffy HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Boarding provision</b>	
<b>Social care URN</b>	
<b>Social care inspector</b>	Helen Rowe

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Children's centre
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	78
Sixth form	44
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Richard Speight
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jonathan Farnhill
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 November 2004

<b>School address</b>	50 Topsham Road Exeter EX2 4NF
<b>Telephone number</b>	01392 272692
<b>Fax number</b>	01392 431146

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Inspection report Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education, 7–8 October 2008

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two social care inspectors. It included inspection of the boarding provision and of the sixth form provision made by the college for students funded privately or by their local authority. A simultaneous inspection was carried out of the post sixteen provision made by the college for students funded by the Learning and Skills Council and the outcomes of this are contained in a separate report.

## **Description of the school**

The Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education comprises a school for pupils aged 5 – 16 and a college for students aged 16+, which is its largest department. It also contains an educational development department, which serves the needs of the students and the external community through extended, outreach services. The Academy offers residential and day placements for its students who attend from a very wide area. It increasingly includes students with learning difficulties and/or additional disabilities and emotional and behavioural needs. The academy is committed to the development of both English and British sign language (BSL).

## **Key for inspection grades**

**Grade 1** Outstanding

**Grade 2** Good

**Grade 3** Satisfactory

**Grade 4** Inadequate

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## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

**Grade: 3**

The Royal Academy for Deaf Education has undergone significant changes since its last inspection. The school, which forms part of the academy, is satisfactory and improving. Much has been achieved in the past two years, and the early impact of this can be seen in rising standards by the end of Year 11.

The decision to position the academy as a developing centre of excellence for deaf education has brought about a change of ethos which has impacted positively upon the personal development and well-being of students within the school. This has been most notable with regard to the communication policy, where BSL and English are valued equally and used to support students' learning. Students have reacted well to this and attendance is good. Parental views also indicate support, with one parent saying, 'I am very pleased with the confidence the school has given my child'.

Overall, students make satisfactory progress during their time at the school. Almost all students are working at a language level in English which is significantly below their chronological age, and many have additional social, emotional or learning difficulties. As a result, they reach standards that are below those found nationally. A key factor in the school's drive to raise standards and achievement is a curriculum that is increasingly tailored to meet the needs of the students. The school's leaders know that this is not

yet happening consistently enough, particularly in the way in which literacy and numeracy skills are developed across each subject.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The school has introduced a robust system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and is beginning to take action to address any areas of weakness. Relationships between students and staff are very positive, contributing to students' enjoyment of most of their lessons. The school's focus on emotional and behavioural development ensures that behaviour around the school is good. Students and parents alike value the level of care shown by the school, especially for those who are boarders or who have just joined and are settling in. Appropriate systems are now in place for staff to set targets and monitor progress, and these are showing an early impact on standards. However, academic guidance, where students know and evaluate their own targets, is relatively under-developed so that care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall.

Although many initiatives are too new to have impacted strongly, the headteacher and deputy headteacher provide clear direction and manage the school effectively. Through a period of rapid change, the school has gained an increasingly accurate awareness of its strengths and areas for development and has demonstrated satisfactory capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

## **Grade: 3**

The provision made for sixth form students is satisfactory overall. As a result of their learning difficulties and/or disabilities students reach standards which are below those expected nationally. However, they achieve a wide range of qualifications from pre-entry to level 3 on vocational and academic programmes, moving onto higher level courses within local general further education colleges. Teaching and learning is satisfactory although planning for learning matched to individual learner needs is in need of further improvement. Students' functional literacy and numeracy skills are most effectively developed when practised within practical activities and vocational programmes.

The overall progress made in students' personal development is satisfactory but not sufficiently recorded. Students enjoy their education and benefit from the good variety of curriculum and extensive enrichment activities on offer. Care, support and guidance are satisfactory. Communication support workers and teaching assistants' expertise and skills in BSL have improved significantly and support for learners during lessons is particularly effective.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory although monitoring of this in the college is less well

developed than in the school. Self evaluation although satisfactory lacks rigour. Learning resources are adequate and teaching accommodation is satisfactory. Financial management is sound and involves managers in the setting and monitoring of budgets.

## **Effectiveness of boarding provision**

**Grade: 3**

The quality of boarding provision is satisfactory. The school has satisfactorily addressed seven of the 11 recommendations from the last inspection. Four recommendations have not been met, relating to safeguarding, such as the evidencing of staff recruitment procedures, the development of an environmental risk assessment, recording of sanctions and physical interventions and the monitoring of records.

Students are supported to access the health services they need. Medical history and health needs are well recorded in individual health plans. Staff assisting with intimate care are provided with the appropriate training and written guidance. The administration of medication policy is in draft but staff are aware of it and are applying it. Administration of medication is satisfactorily recorded but an additional bound book to record administration of controlled drugs is not used. Students can self-administer their medication, where appropriate, but there are no risk assessments in place. Students are provided with a healthy, balanced diet and appropriate advice and guidance on maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Mealtimes are relaxed, social occasions. Self-catering students are provided with appropriate advice and guidance for preparing meals. Records of fridge and freezer temperatures in residential units are not being kept.

Students' privacy is respected and information held is handled confidentially in line with policies and procedures. Students are able to maintain contact with family and friends, in privacy, via the phone, internet and texts. Contact facilities have been improved with the installation of the video conferencing suite and wireless network connections.

Appropriate systems safeguard the welfare of students. Students feel safe and enjoy being at the Academy. There is an effective complaints policy and procedure in operation. Clear anti-bullying policies and procedures are in place. Instances or reports of bullying are taken seriously and dealt with effectively. There is not a satisfactory system for monitoring and evaluating effects of any bullying or discriminatory behaviour. Training in the child protection policy and procedures is mandatory for all staff, including annual updates by the designated person for child protection. The quality of recording of potential safeguarding issues is inconsistent. Appropriate measures are in place to ensure that students who are absent without authority are protected in line with written policy and guidance.

Good systems ensure that students receive any individual support they require. Each student has an effective individual behavioural plan, which includes an individual risk assessment. The current policy on behaviour management does not include information on permissible physical interventions and sanctions. However, staff and students are aware of sanctions that could be applied and why. Students feel that sanctions are used fairly and equitably. Staff are trained in de-escalation and physical intervention techniques. The bound records of sanctions applied and physical interventions used do not hold all the necessary information.

Positive steps are taken to keep students, staff and visitors safe from risk of fire and other hazards. However, premises risk assessments are not in place. External lighting in some areas is poor. This impairs communication and increases risk. A satisfactory written policy and procedure is in place in relation to staff recruitment and the vetting of others working with students. Discussions with staff showed that this is generally adhered to. However, there is insufficient verification of the recruitment process undertaken in some of the staff records.

Good links exist between education and care. Staff communicate well about students' needs and daily events. Care staff assist and support students with homework. There is suitable provision for private study. Students can access computers and the internet in the evening to support their learning. A very good range of age-appropriate leisure activities, both on and off-site is available. Students enjoy the activities available to them and have choice in these. A comprehensive risk assessment process is used for off-site activities and trips.

Consultation with students is good. Students feel that the student councils are a very effective means for expressing their views, which are taken seriously.

There are strong, positive relationships between students and staff. Staff receive training on positive care and management of behaviour. They relate to the students in a nurturing, caring and professional manner at all times. Care plans contain all the required information and are regularly updated and reviewed. Students are fully involved in the care planning process.

Residential accommodation is furnished in a homely fashion and is generally well-maintained, with sufficient bathing and toilet facilities for the number of students. Staff and visitors use separate facilities. Bathrooms and toilets have appropriate locks. Student bedrooms are all single occupancy and are suitably and comfortably furnished. Students like their bedrooms and can personalise them if they wish to. There are comfortable, spacious and well-equipped communal residential areas. There is an on-site swimming pool and extensive recreational grounds.

Students have a copy of the student guide, which they feel contains the information they need. The Statement of Purpose does not include all the information it should.

Levels of staffing in the residential units are appropriate and continuity of care is very good. Staff clearly know about, and understand, the needs of the students they are caring for. The good communication and cohesion amongst staff teams is beneficial to the students. Staff are actively encouraged and supported to undertake appropriate training. By the end of November 2008, over 90% of care staff will have achieved national vocational qualification (NVQ) Level 3 in caring for children and young people. A system for the appraisal and supervision of all staff has been implemented this term but there is no written policy for supervision.

Whilst students are being well cared for, there are some significant shortfalls in the internal monitoring systems, chiefly in the monitoring of the academy's recruitment processes and instances of bullying and discriminatory behaviour. There is no premises risk assessment and an inadequate policy and procedure for infection control. In addition, there is a lack of consistency and scrutiny in the monitoring of general records. The Standard 33 monitoring visits have not been consistently undertaken each half-term.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Implement a comprehensive tracking system to ensure that the leadership and management of the school use information effectively to drive forward school improvement.
- Ensure the consistent involvement of students in setting and monitoring their own learning targets.
- Ensure consistency in the way in which literacy and numeracy are developed across subjects.
- Ensure that the governing body is sufficiently rigorous in fulfilling its monitoring role.
- Ensure that the bound records of incidents necessitating the use of physical intervention and the use of sanctions include all the elements listed in National Minimum Standard 10.14 and National Minimum Standard 10.9 respectively (NMS 10).
- Ensure that risk assessments are carried out, recorded and reviewed on the Academy's premises, including external lighting (NMS 26).
- Ensure that the system for recruiting staff includes all the elements listed under National Minimum Standard 27.2, that recruitment records verify what has been done and that effective monitoring of this takes place (NMS 27).
- Ensure that there is a comprehensive policy and procedure for infection control in operation, particularly in relation to the risks from the handling of soiled items and bodily fluids (NMS 26).

- Ensure that records are monitored and signed to identify any patterns of issues requiring action, including incidents of bullying and discriminatory behaviour (NMS 32).
- Ensure that the Statement of Purpose includes the admission criteria, a list of staff and their professional qualifications and the use of bedroom door alarms (NMS 1).
- Ensure that there is a written policy in place covering the arrangements for staff supervision (NMS 30).

## **National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care**

### **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Students enter the school at various stages in their school career. Attainment on entry is significantly below the national average. Students are working from below national curriculum level 1 to GCSE level and progress varies between individuals.

Taking into account the ability of the students when they joined the school, progress overall by the end of Key Stage 4 is satisfactory and for some individuals it is good. Mainstream links help older students gain a broader range of accreditation and in some cases contribute significantly to the good progress being made. At Key Stage 4, there has been a rise in standards over the last two years although they remain below national expectation because of students' learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The average number of one or more A\* to G grades gained at GCSE has increased from one to three, with students doing consistently well in art and design. The number gaining one or more entry-level qualification has increased from three to ten and in 2008 all year 11 students gained a level 3 entry level award in humanities in one year. Predicted grades for students due to gain external accreditation at the end of Year 11 are in place and available data indicates that these are realistic with most students on track to achieve them.

Progress made by students at Key Stage 3 is the most variable, due in part to the students' previous school experiences and to the significant additional learning needs of some of this group. In some cases progress is good, notably where the school's focus on improving attitudes to learning has had the greatest impact. For a very few students, particularly where targets are not sufficiently well matched to their abilities, progress is inadequate.

For the small number of students in Key Stage 2 progress is satisfactory overall. There are early signs that the vertical grouping, which includes them with students from Key Stage 3 for certain lessons, is raising aspiration and increasing the rate of progress, particularly for the most able. There was only one student in Key Stage 1 last year. The three students currently in Key Stage 1 have only recently joined the school. Although there is an appropriate benchmarking system in place to determine current levels and set targets following entry, the inspection took place too early in the school year for conclusions to be made about the progress of the students concerned.

The school has made a good start in addressing the needs of more able students whom it has identified as potentially underachieving. Well-focused targets, which are now linked appropriately with targets for academic achievement, ensure that good progress is made in the areas of social, emotional and communication development.

## **Personal development and well-being**

## **Grade: 2**

The school's increased emphasis upon supporting students' emotional and behavioural development has had a significant impact upon their attitude to learning. Students speak positively about changes and developments in the school, especially with regard to behaviour, and say that they feel safer from physical or verbal abuse as a result. Student 'voice' is used effectively and school council members are proud of the role they play and the changes that they have influenced, such as in improving the mealtime menu. The school has been responsive to students' evaluation of their mainstream experience and this has enhanced their enjoyment and increased achievement. For example, students suggested that timetables be re-arranged so that they could attend mainstream settings together. As a result, they now feel more confident and are able to take part in mainstream lessons more successfully.

Relationships are good between and amongst students and staff and students enjoy school, particularly the camaraderie engendered by being a boarder. They value the increasing emphasis on Deaf culture and experience a range of other cultures through visits and visitors. Their moral and spiritual development is good. Students enjoy the range of sporting opportunities available both within and outside school. They have responded well to the sex education modules provided by the group deaf@x, and demonstrate that they understand how to lead healthy lifestyles and how to keep themselves safe. Through many work-related opportunities students develop social and information technology skills which will support them when they leave school. They make a positive contribution to their own and the broader community and are excellent ambassadors for the promotion of deaf awareness.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are variable with a range of quality across lessons. There is some good and outstanding teaching. The best lessons are well planned because teachers know the students well and the work matches the full range of abilities so that all make good progress. In these lessons teachers demonstrate an excellent knowledge of their subject and there is a variety of well thought out activities which match different learning styles. The best teaching engages the students well and their learning is carefully monitored through active questioning and good assessment of students' work. In these lessons, teaching is also good for students with learning difficulties and/or additional disabilities and teaching assistants make a positive contribution to the progress made. In the less successful lessons, the work is not sufficiently adapted to meet the needs of all learners, there is too much adult intervention and inadequate progress is made. Some areas of the school are cluttered and as a result do not provide suitable environments for learning.

Relationships between staff and students are positive and supportive. Students listen and watch carefully and behave well where teachers use a variety of techniques to improve and support learning. Students are not always aware of how they can improve in their work as the use of academic targets is not consistent.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 3**

The school provides a satisfactory and improving curriculum, which meets all statutory requirements and is increasingly meeting the needs of all the students. The school has responded well to a recent demand for places at Key Stage 1 and 2 and students benefit from the flexible curriculum now on offer across these key stages. At Key Stage 3, themed learning has been introduced which incorporates several subjects, including work related learning. The school provides an increased variety of subjects in Key Stage 4, including the Learn2Work programme, which provides vocational opportunities for students, enabling them to make a positive contribution to society when they leave school. The Access to Language curriculum, devised by the school's speech and language therapists, contains three strands of language learning: BSL through play, Cued English, and live English. This is a relatively recent development and, as a result, it is not yet possible to judge the impact on students' learning although their enjoyment is evident.

The curriculum is enhanced further through a wide range of enrichment activities including the use of visits and visitors from a variety of cultures and faiths. Students also benefit from other opportunities to participate, such as when performers from 'Music and the Deaf' visit the school. The school has a wide array of links with other schools, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, which contributes very positively to the students' knowledge and understanding of communities outside their school. These links have resulted in students delivering assemblies in local mainstream schools, participating in BSL lessons for local hearing students and exchanges with schools in Europe.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 3**

The care, guidance and support for students are satisfactory. The school provides good levels of pastoral care and adequate levels of academic guidance. Staff know the students well and are increasingly committed to raising their achievements but the quality of feedback to students is inconsistent across the school. Students are involved in the setting of targets for improving their behaviour, but are not all fully involved in setting targets for curriculum subjects.

Pastoral care is good for vulnerable students and those who have been at risk of exclusion and there are effective systems in place to provide support for any students whose engagement in their education shows signs of slipping. Appropriate training in child protection and safeguarding procedures has taken place for all staff in the school. Good links with outside agencies, including a specialist service for deaf students who are at risk of mental health issues, mean that there is a wide range of support available for students should it be required. Students are given good advice about pathways on leaving school and are appropriately made aware of the progression routes.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 3**

Since the last inspection, changes made to the leadership and management of the Academy have included the appointment of a new headteacher and deputy headteacher for the school. School leaders are now setting a clear direction for improvement and creating a common sense of purpose amongst staff. The vast majority of parents express satisfaction with the school and how it is led and managed.

While there are strengths in students' personal development and in areas of curriculum provision, a legacy of relative weaknesses is still apparent. Realistic self-evaluation shows that the school is aware of these and has made a good start in addressing

identified areas for development. Increasingly challenging targets are in place and school leaders have a clear understanding of how well individual students are progressing. Data is not yet being used fully to monitor progress and drive forward improvement at a wider level.

Opportunities for teachers to learn from each other have not been fully utilised. However, the introduction of more rigorous monitoring, coupled with well-focused professional development, shows that the school is effectively addressing the need for more consistent practice in teaching. Resources are generally deployed appropriately. The newly introduced fee matrix, linked to levels of need, supports this. Safeguarding arrangements fulfil statutory obligations but recruitment procedures are not always fully recorded in individual staff files.

The academy's focus on raising its profile within the community has been very effective so that the school's contribution to community cohesion is good. The governing body is very supportive of the school. It has recently been reorganised and has not yet demonstrated a level of challenge that links directly to raising standards. However, it has worked well with the leadership team and with other partners to steer the academy effectively through a significant period of change and development.

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## Annex A

### Inspection judgements

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.</b>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-	2	2

being?		
The effectiveness of boarding provision	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3

## Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3	3

## Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	3	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3	3

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex B

### Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Students

Inspection of The Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education, EX2 4NF

Thank you very much for welcoming us to your school. We really enjoyed our visit, and it was good to meet so many of you. I am writing this letter to tell you what we found.

We think your school, including the boarding, is satisfactory. Lots of you told us that you enjoy school and we could see that you have good relationships with each other and with the staff. We could also see that some of you have improved your behaviour and this has helped you to learn more. There are plenty of interesting things for you to

do both in and out of school. You are right to be proud of what you do to promote Deaf awareness.

Your headteacher and deputy headteacher have lots of ideas about how the school can get better. We have asked them:

- ?
- to use all the information they have to show how well the school is doing and how it can improve ?
- to make sure that you know how well you are doing in your work and how you can improve ?
- to help you improve your reading, writing and number skills in every subject

We have asked the governors:

- ?
- to make sure they know all about what is happening in the school.

We have asked the school and the care staff:

- ?
- to make sure that they meet all the rules which mean that you are safe and well looked after. I hope that you will all try your best and do well in the future.

Anne Duffy HMI